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Administrative and financial implications of the decisions and recommendations contained in the report of the International Civil Service Commission for the year 2011

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

Addendum

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Summary

The present statement, submitted pursuant to rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, describes the administrative and financial implications arising from the decisions and recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission for the common system contained in the addendum to the report of the Commission for 2011, issued on 11 April 2012 (A/66/30/Add.1).

Consistent with the former statement issued by the Secretary-General (A/66/394), this addendum considers the implications for peacekeeping operations and the support account for peacekeeping operations, as well as the programme budget.

Should the General Assembly approve the recommendations of the Commission contained in the addendum to the Commission's annual report for 2011, namely the approval of the revised set of criteria for the granting of rest and recuperation travel and the corresponding frequencies of travel, there would be no additional resource requirements under the programme budget of the United Nations for the biennium 2012-2013; the budget for peacekeeping operations; or the budget for the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.

However, the Secretary-General considers it important to bring to the attention of the General Assembly circumstances that were not known at the time the International Civil Service Commission made its recommendations in its main report for 2011, but which have since come to light. In particular, the addendum to the Commission's report for 2011 takes into account the significant increase in the number of locations previously identified for a four-week rest and recuperation cycle. As a consequence, the Assembly should be aware that an operational and potential financial impact arises from the Assembly's decision contained in section C of its resolution 66/235 to approve the Commission's recommendation to automatically assign a four-week rest and recuperation cycle to duty stations where staff receive danger pay. The impact, summarized below, applies if the recommendations contained in the addendum (A/66/30/Add.1) are not approved.

If a four-week rest and recuperation cycle were automatically assigned to duty stations in the United Nations system where staff receive danger pay, it is not anticipated that there would be significant increases in travel costs for the United Nations Secretariat because of the availability of United Nations flights for the vast majority of rest and recuperation travel.

The principal impact for the United Nations Secretariat of the implementation of the automatic four-week rest and recuperation cycle is reduced overall operational productivity. Such a loss of overall productivity will need to be mitigated with increases and/or realignment of staff resources, which will vary considerably across the affected duty stations, depending on the size of the duty station and the prevailing operational environment. At the present time, there is insufficient information on the operational impact and subsequent need for increases and/or realignment of staff resources arising from the revised rest and recuperation framework and the corresponding frequency of travel to enable the Secretariat to determine the full potential financial implications.

I. Introduction

1. The addendum to the annual report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2011 (A/66/30/Add.1) reconsiders the rest and recuperation framework which has an automatic link to danger pay. The revised rest and recuperation framework was proposed in the Commission's report for 2011 and approved by the General Assembly in section C of its resolution 66/235. The present statement takes into account new information which was not available at the time the Assembly reached its conclusion on the matter, in December 2011.

II. Conditions of service in the field: harmonization of conditions of service for staff serving in field duty stations in the common system

A. Establishment of a four-week cycle

2. At its seventy-third session in 2011, the Commission decided on a revised rest and recuperation framework that would become effective on 1 January 2012, which contained a frequency cycle of four weeks linked to danger pay. Given the stricter definition of danger pay (compared with hazard pay), the Commission had expected that it would be applied to a limited number of locations. Thus, when the recommendation was made to link the four-week rest and recuperation cycle with danger pay, it was assumed that there would be no significant financial and operational impact. However, the number of locations that were subsequently identified for danger pay, in February 2012, represents a significant increase in the number of locations previously identified for a four-week rest and recuperation cycle. Therefore, at its session held in the first quarter of 2012, the Commission decided to delay the implementation of the rest and recuperation framework until 1 July 2012 and proposed a revised rest and recuperation framework to the General Assembly in the addendum to the Commission's annual report for 2011 (A/66/30/Add.1), recommending that the automatic triggering of a four-week rest and recuperation cycle be delinked from all duty stations approved for danger pay.

3. Should the General Assembly decide not to follow the Commission's recommendation, there would be operational implications for duty stations where danger pay is applicable. Considering that at any given time about 25 per cent of international staff at these duty stations will be absent on rest and recuperation, compounded by high vacancy rates in those duty stations, a decrease in operational productivity associated with the frequency of rest and recuperation cycles is to be expected. The precise operational impact and the subsequent need for increases and/or realignment of staff resources can only be determined based on actual experience in each duty station on a case-by-case basis.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

4. The financial and administrative implications arising from the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission are as follows:

The General Assembly is requested to take note that should the recommendations of the Commission be adopted, there would be no additional resource requirements under the programme budget of the United Nations for the biennium 2012-2013; the budget for peacekeeping operations; or the budget for the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.